
Urbain Grandier:

Progressive Priest and Problematic Hot Boy

By A Horrible Little Creature

One thing I've learned from almost 3 years in university is that every history nerd seems to have a historical figure they love, not because of how they changed the course of history, but because they had some funky cool vibes. For me, that would be Urbain Grandier. I first started my weird little love affair with this 17th-century French priest when I listened to a podcast about a pack of possessed nuns in the town of Loudun, and I was genuinely hooked. I haven't stopped thinking about it since, really. Not only does this story have demonic nuns, but it also has so much intrigue and mystery it would make a true crime writer cream their pants. But, to start telling this story how I'd like to, I have to start with a bit of a spoiler: The story ends with my boy Urbain's execution. His crime? Witchcraft, having supposedly made a deal with the devil in the name of power and lust. There was even a signed contract to legitimise the deal.

I, however, am a staunch Urbain Grandier defender.

My boy is *innocent*. I truly believe that my poor, sweet Urbain Grandier was the victim of a political conspiracy involving multiple different people, all who had their reasons to want him gone. However, my boy really didn't do anything wrong. The only crimes he was guilty of were being hot and slightly problematic.

Ok, maybe very problematic.

To start, Urbain Grandier had gained himself a reputation for being a rather polarising character in the politics of the French church. He was a charming and charismatic man, and he used that to make himself some powerful friends and became an asset to the church. One such friend was Louis Trincant, the prosecutor for King Louis XIII.

These two weren't friends for long, though, but we'll get to that later. It's more fun that way. During this time, France was divided by the beliefs of the Catholic Church and the Protestant Enlightenment in the War of Religions. Grandier was staunch in his defence of the Catholic Church and the protections it provided France, which earned him the favour of Cardinal Richelieu, the Chief Minister of France. So, when the frontier town of Loudun started to struggle with this divide, Grandier was given a promotion and sent to take over the parish of Saint-Pierre-du-Marché, on account of his loyalty. However, this doesn't mean he was much

of a *good* priest. He was insolent to his peers, and he liked to play fast and loose with his priestly vows. He even went as far as to write a book attacking the practice of clerical celibacy. This made him a little bit of a polarising figure. Some loved him for it, while others absolutely despised him and his radical beliefs.

However, this new position was a bit of a prestigious one, putting him centre stage in the religious and political scene of Loudun. Despite his loosey-goosey approach to being a priest, he must have been doing pretty okay at this new job because shortly after his arrival, he was approached by Jeanne des Agnes, the Mother Superior of Loudun's Ursuline convent, about a position there as their spiritual advisor. Now, there's a lot of speculation about what exactly happened during the meeting because it happened behind closed doors, between just the two of them. Jeanne des Agnes seemed to be a little bit obsessed with Grandier and his scandalous reputation. After hearing tales of his sexual exploits and promiscuity, she wanted in on the fun. In her autobiography, she says, "When I did not see him, I burned with love for him and when he presented himself to me ...I lacked the faith to combat the impure thoughts and movements that I felt."

Which, like, honestly? Understandable.

Despite her claim that Grandier 'presented' himself to her, it seems that he shot down her advances, and she was none too happy about this rejection. Instead, she decided to offer the role to Canon Jean Mignon, who was notably an enemy of Urbain and the Nephew to Louis Trincant, the King's Prosecutor. Thus, two notable figures in Grandier's life would be brought together and possibly into cahoots as the real chaos of this story begins.

It wasn't all that long after this that the good sister Jeanne des Agnes began to report some odd experiences. She was having convulsive episodes of erratic and uncontrollable behaviours, such as screaming, cursing and speaking in tongues. She also began to see visions of a shadowy figure who would visit her during the night, tormenting her with dark and grotesque imagery and leaving her with bruises, cuts and other physical wounds. Jeanne des Agnes would claim that these were all evidence of demonic possession, inflicted upon her by the shadowy figure, and who did she claim this figure was? None other than our sweet, sweet boy, Urbain Grandier.

It wasn't long before other nuns residing at the convent began to come forward, claiming that they, too, were victims of the demons haunting Jeanne des Agnes. Eventually, a total of 17 possessed nuns were identified. Their claims were extraordinary, and people came from all

over to get a glimpse of the unholy nuns of Loudun. Understandable, given that they didn't have movies like *The Conjuring* yet to get their spooky nun fix.

Or any movies, actually. Because movies didn't exist yet, even though this would've made for a sick *Conjuring* movie or something.

With all eyes on the nuns of Loudun, word of the possessions quickly reached the Church's higher-ups. Demon nuns tend to be bad news for the church, so Cardinal Richelieu called for an investigation to be conducted on the matter. Now *this* is where we bring Monsieur Louis Trincant back into the mix because, as the King's prosecutor, he was a pretty important figure in this whole investigation. However, despite the connection he'd once had with Grandier, he was not on Urbain Grandier's side.

At some point in either 1629 or 1630, Louis' daughter, Philipa, gave birth to a son out of wedlock. No one came forward to claim the child as their own, but the father was reportedly none other than her father's friend, Urbain Grandier. Honestly, that makes sense, given that Father Grandier liked to moonlight as Daddy Grandier in his free time, having had multiple affairs throughout his life despite his role in the Church. This, combined with Urbain Grandier's outspokenness about the French Church, gave Louis Trincant a pretty solid reason not to like the guy, possibly enough of a reason to send his nephew to collude with Grandier's scorned lover, Jeanne des Agnes, in creating this conspiracy about him.

For around four years, the demons used the nuns as their own personal hellaphones. Canon Jean Mignon headed the team of investigators and exorcists sent to deal with the demon infestation, with Jeanne des Agnes acting as the lead victim in the case. When Jean Mignon and his investigators asked the demons why they were there, they told them that they had been instructed to take possession of the poor nuns by our local hot boy priest. Everyone just went along with that and believed them, which is crazy, because I feel like demons famously have a reputation for being massive liars.

Aside from the testimony of Jeanne des Agnes and the other possessed nuns, and also their demons, I guess, one of the biggest and most famous pieces of evidence presented against Urbain Grandier during the investigation was a contract, written by the demons and signed by Grandier.

The contract promised Grandier an abundance of love, lust, honour and power in exchange for the souls of the Ursuline nuns. Another thing to note is how silly some of the names on this contract are. Most of them are pretty standard devil names, like Satan and Asmodeus.

Some are a little more obscure, but they're still recognisable if you're like me and you watch too many horror movies, like Behemoth and Zabulon. But then we get to the last two, which I find really amusing and a bit silly: Alex and Dog's Dick. Like, are those real demons in Christian folklore, or did someone add those into this contract for shits and giggles? Because now I'm worried about a demon named Alex showing up and whispering weird shit to me while I sleep, and I feel like Alex the demon is way scarier than your more run-of-the-mill demons. Can THAT be the plot of the next Conjuring movie?

Anyway, moving on.

It probably goes without saying, but this contract is absolutely ridiculous and raises so many questions about just how demon contracts work, because I feel like a paper-and-ink contract isn't really in the demonic spirit, so I don't really know why the church investigators looked at this thing and went "Yup! That's real!" Unless they had known it was fake the whole time.

It's not at all surprising that the investigation wasn't conclusive. After a short trial, Grandier was found innocent, and he was set free! Yay!

Well, at least until he wrote a satirical book poking fun at Cardinal Richelieu.

This book created enemy No. 3 out of his old friend, the very one who got him his job in the first place. Apparently, the Cardinal had a fair amount of enemies of his own, and Urbain Grandier had lined himself up to be the perfect example of what Richelieu could do to his enemies. He had the investigation reopened. Except this time, Grandier was found guilty of Witchcraft. Now, witchcraft was still a pretty big deal in the 1600s, and so the punishment that followed would also be a big deal. The Church employed tactics of torture to try to get an admission of guilt out of Urbain Grandier, but he held true and maintained his innocence until, after a few weeks, he was burned at the stake.

While the story of Urbain Grandier and the demon nuns is chaotic and fun, and it's fun to speculate about what happened and how, I can't imagine how scary it must have been for Urbain. Though polarising and somewhat problematic, he was passionate about his work in the church and was proud to defend his beliefs; yet, the legacy he left behind is a story that was meticulously crafted to destroy him. It's hard to find anything about him that isn't about that, which I honestly find to be quite sad. Urbain Grandier deserved better.

Justice for Daddy Urbain Grandier.

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